

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 7, 9 – 22, 24 – 38, and 40 - 51 are in the application. Claims 1, 11, 14, 24, 26, 40, 42, and 46 -51 are currently amended; claims 8, 23, and 39 are canceled; and claims 2 – 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15 – 22, 25, 27 – 38, 41, 43, and 44 remain unchanged from the original versions thereof. Claims 1, 11, 14, and 46 – 51 are the independent claims herein.

No new matter has been added to the application as a result of the amendments submitted herewith.

Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102(b)

Claims 1 - 51 were rejected as being anticipated by Honda et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,592,542 cited in Applicant's IDS, hereinafter referred as Honda. This rejection is traversed.

Inasmuch as claims 8, 23, and 39 are canceled, rejection(s) thereto are moot.

Applicant claims relate to methods (claims 1, 11, and 14), agent selection systems (claims 46 - 48), and articles of manufacture (claims 49 - 51) for selecting an agent for a call. For example, claim 1 recites determining an off process time for each of a plurality of agents, wherein an off process time for an agent includes time that said agent has been on hold plus time that said agent has been idle; and routing an incoming call to a first available agent in said plurality of agents, wherein said first available agents has an off process time that is higher than other available agents in said plurality of agents. (emphasis added) Thus, it is clear that the claimed off process time used for routing calls includes time that the agent has been on hold plus time that the agent has been idle (i.e., hold time + idle time).

Claims 46 and 49 include claim language the same as the emphasized claim language of claim 1. Claims 11, 14, 47, 48, 51, and 52 include claim language similar to the emphasized claim language of claim 1.

Contrary to the claimed off process time for routing calls that includes time that the agent has been on hold plus time that the agent has been idle, the cited and relied upon Honda discloses a call distribution control method for routing calls based on a ranked priority of the calls wherein the priority is explicitly based on the *skills* of the agents. Honda clearly states that,

The assignment of priority levels and allocation to an agent group may be performed upon taking the following into consideration: Specifically, a high priority is assigned to a specialized agent having the skill for one type of call (service), and a low priority is assigned to an unskilled agent. It is then arranged so that an incoming call will be terminated at the skilled agent under ordinary circumstances and at the unskilled or unspecialized agent only when there are a large number of incoming calls. Further, a skilled agent capable of dealing also with incoming calls of a plurality of types is allocated to a plurality of agent groups and a low priority is assigned to this agent in each agent group. (emphasis added) (Honda, col. 6, ln. 14 – 52)

Thus, it is clear that the priority ranking of calls in the method disclosed by Honda are specifically based on the skill levels of agents handling the incoming calls.

Honda further discloses an “idle-agent queue” wherein when idle agents of the same skill-based priority are “connected to the tail end of the agent queue of the same priority”. (See Honda, col. 7, ln. 34 – 38) That is, the idle agents are arranged within the skill-based priority agent queues in a sequential, first in first out (FIFO) configuration.

Applicant respectfully submits that Honda does not disclose or even suggest assigning a priority to the agents or routing calls based on any criteria other than the skill level of the agents. Further, agents of the same skill-based priority are specifically arranged in an “idle-agent queue” based only on the time the agents become idle (i.e., an idle time). That is, there is no disclosure or suggestion of the claimed call routing

based on an off process time wherein the off process time for an agent includes time that the agent has been on hold plus time that the agent has been idle.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1, 11, 14, and 46 - 51 are patentable over Honda under 35 USC 102(b). Applicant further submits that dependent claims 2 - 7, 9 - 22, 24 - 38, and 40 - 45 are also patentable over Honda under 35 USC 102(b) for at least reasons similar to those provided for claims 1, 11, and 14.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If any issues remain, or if the Examiner has any further suggestions for expediting allowance of the present application, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned via telephone at (203) 972-5985.

Respectfully submitted,

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